



Newton-Conover City Schools

605 North Ashe Avenue—Newton, NC 28658

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Dr. David Stegall, Superintendent

Dr. Aron Gabriel, Assistant Superintendent



To: Parents and Guardians of N-CCS Students

FROM: David A. Stegall, Ed. D.

DATE: 5/1/2014

Re: Bullying and Cyberbullying

It is the goal of Newton-Conover City Schools to provide a safe, appropriate public education for all students. We take a great deal of pride in our students, our schools, and our community. Moreover, we also take pride in the fact that we can provide students with opportunities to access iPads/tablets, laptops, Chromebooks, and desktop computers in most classrooms. Students also have the opportunity to bring their own devices to school as a result of our commitment to digital learning. All of our schools are wireless, and students are learning valuable lessons about collaboration, communication, research, and Internet safety by interacting with online content in a safe and supervised environment. We strive daily to provide students with appropriate oversight and training to ensure their online safety at school and away from school.

We also know that students can achieve their full potential only when they feel safe, secure, and supported. As a result, one of the cornerstones of our district's policies is a commitment to preventing and addressing bullying behaviors. Newton-Conover School Board **Policy 1710** relates to General Harassment and Bullying. This policy addresses ensuring a safe, orderly, caring, and inviting school environment by addressing discrimination, bullying, and harassment. You may access this policy by visiting bit.ly/nccs1710.

Although bullying has been an ongoing issue that schools and parents have worked together to address, social media and online platforms have provided another avenue for bullying behaviors. Though most teens do not do engage in bullying behavior in any format, those who do are often motivated by a desire for power, status, and attention. The targets of online bullying are often students who are perceived as competing with bullies for social standing. Cyberbullies often take advantage of the Web's anonymity to antagonize someone without being recognized. Cyberbullying is similar to face-to-face bullying, but online tools magnify the hurt, humiliation, and social drama in a very public way. Newton-Conover City School Board **Policy 3226-E** addresses Internet Safety and the training of students. You may access this policy by visiting bit.ly/nccs3226. All K-12 students in Newton-Conover City Schools receive lessons each year about digital citizenship, online safety, and appropriate online interactions.

Keeping the lines of communication open among students, parents, and teachers is crucial to ensuring all students make responsible choices in the digital environment. Often cyberbullying occurs outside of school, but has an adverse effect on the learning environment. Newton-Conover School Board **Policy 4331-A-3** addresses assaults, threats, and harassment (specifically cyberbullying) and how our district addresses acts of cyberbullying that occur during school hours or events as well as outside of school. You may access this policy by visiting bit.ly/nccs4331.

Newton-Conover School Board **Policy 3225-F-1** is a component of our Acceptable Use Policy and gives permission for disciplinary action even if an offense occurs off campus. ***"The superintendent may use any means available to request***

Office of the Superintendent

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the removal of personal websites that substantially disrupt the school environment or that utilize school system or individual school names, logos or trademarks without permission.” ... “Though school personnel generally do not monitor students’ Internet activity conducted on non-school system devices during non-school hours, when the student’s on-line behavior has a direct and immediate effect on school safety or maintaining order and discipline in the schools, the student may be disciplined in accordance with board policy (see the student behavior policies in the 4300 series).” You may access this policy in its entirety by visiting bit.ly/nccs3225.

We also understand that often students use personal wireless devices to access online platforms both at school and at home. Newton-Conover School Board **Policy 4318** addresses the acceptable use of wireless communication devices. This policy outlines authorized use as well as consequences of unauthorized use of wireless devices. One component of this policy is that school personnel may conduct a search of a student's personal electronic device upon reasonable suspicion of unacceptable use. Again, our goal is to ensure the responsible use of digital tools. You may access this policy by visiting bit.ly/nccs4318.

Not only does Newton-Conover City Schools have policies to address cyberbullying and harassment, but our state also has laws in place to prosecute cyberbullying. These General Statutes represent current North Carolina law. In order to support you and our students, it is important that all parents, students, and educators understand the legal implications of online harassment and cyberbullying. North Carolina General Statute **14-458.1** addresses cyberbullying and the penalties for cyberbullying. You can review this statute by visiting the website bit.ly/ncbully. North Carolina General Statute **14-458.2** deals with the bullying of staff by students. You can review this statute by visiting this website bit.ly/ncbully2.

Newton-Conover City Schools is committed to providing a safe and appropriate environment for all students. We acknowledge that we need the support of parents, staff, and community to ensure our students understand the implications of their online actions. To learn more about how cyberbullying and digital safety visit the following resources for parents:

- <http://www.common sense media.org/cyberbullying>
- <http://www.net smartz.org/Parents>

If you ever have reason to believe that your child is being bullied or cyber-bullied at school, please contact your child’s principal.

As you review these policies, laws, and resources, please contact your child’s principal or guidance counselor with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

David A. Stegall, Ed. D.
Superintendent
Newton-Conover City Schools

Office of the Superintendent

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